

The American MUSIC LOVER

The Record Connoisseur's Magazine



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Edited by PETER HUGH REED



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Editorial Notes

This past month has been one of the busiest we have known in many years. Perhaps at no time have we missed so much our valued assistant and friend, Lt. Harold Schonberg, who is now a cryptographic officer operating from a base somewhere in England. Like lots of others we had sickness to retard our progress, but despite difficulties we managed to get through.

Never in the life of this periodical have we had the good will and well wishing that came our way this past Christmas. Many readers we know only as names, and others with whom we have corresponded or have met in person, sent us greetings and congratulations on our efforts during these trying times. We are most grateful for these expressions of loyalty and good will; they help to lighten the burden. Our dealers also expressed appreciation of our efforts to keep the ball rolling in an industry that has been badly affected on two fronts. In a few kindly, appreciative words, Philip Diamond of the Liberty Music Shop of Ann Arbor, Michigan, said what others wrote in letters of greater length: "We know it must be hard to keep going under present conditions, but yours is a work that needs to be done and we are grateful to you for doing it so well." Need we add, we are deeply grateful for Mr. Diamond's and

the many other dealer's friendly pats on the back?

One always hopes one's work is a job that needs to be done. There are many obstacles. The paper situation presents a grave problem; the December issue was delayed five days because we were unable to obtain paper as soon as we wanted it. The increase in our subscriptions this past year leaves us with so few copies at the end of each month that many issues are bound to be hard to get in a few months' time. Hence, we take this occasion to urge readers who wish to have current issues not to put off their renewals for several months, and then expect to get the missing copies between the expiration and renewal dates. We would like to cooperate fully but we are not allowed to print as many extra copies as we formerly did.

* * *

That enterprising young music enthusiast, Pvt. Leo Goldstein, who is now somewhere in Allied Italy, has sent us more information on recordings in that country. In his latest letter, he gives us considerable information on Fonit and Fonit-Polydor discs, which will be presented next month. The fact that Pvt. Goldstein has been in the hospital, as the result of a minor ailment, has prevented

(Continued on page 140)

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EARLY WAGNERIAN HEROINES

Right-Wilhelmine
Schroeder-Dev-
rient as Senta.

Below on left:
Mathilde Weker-
lin as Elisabeth;
on right Mathilde
Mallinger as Elsa.





A SURVEY OF RECORDED OPERA ARIAS

PETER HUGH REED

PART 9

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) still remains supreme among all 19th-century operatic composers. Today, his popularity in the theater is greater than it ever was. Wagner, the musician, incites our admiration, but Wagner, the man, remains distasteful. He was, to say the least, a most reprehensible individual. Yet, had he not been such a ruthless egoist, and used people to serve his own ends, he might not have realized his growth as an artist. Art and the artist offer many paradoxes in history, but none is more amazing than the case of Wagner. His ruthless perseverance results in his becoming the most striking figure in the history of opera, and one of the most vital forces in the cultural life of his century.

As a child Wagner was drawn to the theater; he wrote plays before he thought of becoming a composer. It is not surprising therefore to find him the first operatic composer to write all his own librettos. Wagner's earliest operas—*Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot*—showed no striking evidences of the genius he was to display later; the latter was merely reminiscent of Auber. *Rienzi*, which came next, was an imitation of Meyerbeer. *The Flying*

Dutchman is a potpourri of styles; there is something of Weber and something of Auber, and Senta's ballad is the traditional romance of French opera. *Tannhäuser*, separated from the *Dutchman* by only two years, represents a wider traversing of territory than the journey from Holland to Thuringia. The ghost of Weber is not far distant but the Wagnerian style has already begun to take shape. With the appearance of *Lohengrin*, his genius has begun to assert itself. And with the production of *Tristan and Isolde* it is made fully manifest.

I have never heard any vocal excerpts from Wagner's earliest operas, nor have I ever had the urge to look up any. Irene, the heroine of *Rienzi*, fares less auspiciously than Wagner's other heroines. Who sings any of her music today in public? Wagner, following a French custom, made *Rienzi*'s son Ariano a mezzo-soprano, and the aria *Gerechter Gott!* has been sung on records by several notable contraltos.

In *The Flying Dutchman* we note Wagner's first tentative steps toward his music-drama form. To be sure, he constructed the libretto in a manner to provide the conventional aria, duet, trio, etc. But, Ernest Newman contends, although these old divisions of opera exist in *The Flying*

Dutchman, they are not imposed arbitrarily upon the dramatic subject, but grow naturally out of it. The fact that the original staging of this opera offered more difficulties than the Dresden machinists could cope with reminds us that Wagner's realistic music too often defeats his dramatic effects. (One wonders when an enterprising moving picture company will undertake a Wagner opera for the screen. The old silent film, called, if memory serves, *Siegfried*, was a tantalizing sample of what could be done.) The often ludicrous staging of Wagner's music dramas, in Europe as well as this country, has left many listeners with the firm conviction that a Wagner score is best heard and not seen. Certainly, few Wagnerian singers present the happiest embodiments of his romantic characters. The original Dutchman, Michael Waechter, was excessively fat and had stumpy arms and legs. Nor was the first Senta a romantic figure; she, too, was well upholstered. But Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient was undeniably a capable actress as well as the greatest dramatic singer of her epoch. Apparently she did not regard her own form as "out of the picture" because she ridiculed Waechter's unmercifully. She told Wagner at a rehearsal that it was almost impossible for her to proclaim herself as the Dutchman's heaven-sent angel in the great love-duet at the end of the second act. "How can I say it," she exclaimed despairingly to the composer, "when I look into those beady eyes? Good God, Wagner, what a mess you have made!" One wonders how many times other singers have wanted to utter those same words. It is amusing to note that Schroeder-Devrient was having amatory troubles while preparing her role, and that "she was living at the time in a stage of perpetual nerves, hardly eating or sleeping." Newman tells us, however, that Wagner noted to his satisfaction that her emotional upset provided her Senta with a quality it might not otherwise have had. Such conditions have more often defeated operatic artists than aided them. It is well that audiences know as little as they do of the noted singers they worship.

Senta's ballad, *Traft ihr das Schiff*, was regarded by Wagner as "the central psy-

chological and musical point of the opera." It is as effective dramatically as it is musically. Two notable sopranos have made splendid recordings of this air, Emmy Bettendorf and Florence Austral. There is undeniably greater amplitude of voice and orchestra in the Austral version (Victor 7117—sung in English), but I prefer the Bettendorf (Parlophone E10716; Columbia G5112M; Decca 25075). The expressive beauty of Bettendorf's voice and her ability to shade stands her in good stead; moreover, despite the lesser amplitude of the orchestral background, it is more expressively played by Moerike, one of the most talented German conductors of his time, and the chorus adds a realistic touch to the ensemble. I have not heard the Nanny Larsen-Todsen version (Parlophone R-1079); hers was a big voice, however, which I feel certain would be heard to greater advantage in other Wagnerian roles than Senta. Elisabeth Ohms, the noted Dutch soprano, brought beauty of tone to her reading (Polydor 66928) but her control was less than perfect. Rethberg did justice to the ballad (Victor 1477—made in 1930), but in both this and Ohms' recording the orchestra is not too good and the absence of the chorus leaves something to be desired. Jeritza's version (Victor 6577—circa 1923), also without chorus, is sung with dramatic power but little finesse; and Gadski's recording (IRCC 26; Victor 88116—1908), although illustrating the singer's dramatic poise and vocal finesse, hardly satisfies with its grunting instrumental background.

The Love Duet

For sheer vocal beauty, I know of few recordings as satisfying as Elisabeth Ohms' and Theodor Scheidl's version of the *Love Duet* at the end of the second act (Polydor 95407; Brunswick 90081). There is a sentient warmth and womanly tenderness to Ohms' singing, and Scheidl's more precise style serves as an excellent foil to her expression of his salvation. Emmy Bettendorf and Werner Engel also sang this scene exceedingly well, but the recording (Parlophone 10182), an acoustic one, prevented them from achieving the effects of the Ohms-Scheidl version. When Ohms begins the phrase *Er steht vor mir*, in

which Wagner appears to have anticipated his Elsa, she seems inspired, and her singing from there onwards to the end of the first record side conveys Senta's character in a way I feel certain Wagner would have heartily applauded.

Tannhaeuser

The story of *Tannhaeuser* is based on legend, but the character Elisabeth is Wagner's own. She dominates the drama, and on the whole her music endures in most opera-goers' minds. The recorded version of this opera, made at the Bayreuth Festival in 1930, remains one of the finest offerings to date from the celebrated Wagner center. It boasts one of the best Elisabeths of modern times—Maria Mueller. Her singing of Elisabeth's famous scenes—the Greeting to the Hall of Song, her offer of protection to the Knight in the finale of the second act, and her *Prayer*—are rendered with dramatic thrust and expressive, full-bodied tone. If Elisabeth is played by a great singer, she inevitably overshadows Tannhaeuser; I have never heard any tenor (and that includes Melchior) cope with the Knight's music successfully, it is a seemingly impossible task (he should convey youthfulness and freedom in song). Sigismund Pilinsky, Mueller's partner, suggests strongly that his sojourn in the Venusburg left him vocally as well as emotionally unstable.

The richness of Wagner's orchestra defeated the early singers for the phonograph; as fine as some of the old recordings of Gadski, Nordica, Farrar, Destinn, etc. were vocally, the lack of an adequate orchestra behind them leaves their Wagnerian souvenirs unsatisfactory. Gadski's *Dich teure Halle* has been re-pressed by Victor in its set of old singers (No. 816). Made in 1907, it illustrates her vocal splendor at the height of her career, but the ineffectual orchestra as well as the acoustic horn seems to have prevented spontaneity in her singing; moreover one or two tones (particularly the last) are insecurely focused. There is more exaltation in this aria, as the recordings by Mueller and Lotte Lehmann show. Lehmann's Elisabeth has always been one of her finest achievements. Her recording (Parlophone R020139 or Decca 20283—

circa 1930) has youthful fervor and an elation that is irresistible. I own the original Parlophone pressing; the Decca is by no means as good. Rethberg's version (Victor 6831—1928) is beautifully sung with a joyful animation, but the orchestral accompaniment sounds cramped. Tiana Lemnitz's performance (Decca - Polydor CA8243) remains my favorite; it is one of this extraordinarily gifted singer's finest records. There is the womanly tenderness, which Lehmann knows so well how to bring to her singing, and there is the dramatic effulgence of Mueller; in addition, Lemnitz's vocal production is unassailable. This record, pressed in England, may be difficult to obtain at the present moment, but not impossible. Traubel's version has aptly been described as "loud and vigorous"; there is more healthy exuberance to her singing than exultant expression. Flagstad's version (Victor 14181) seems "over-excited and rushed," it does not convey true exhilaration; moreover the recording and orchestra leave much to be desired. Margarete Baeumer, a highly talented Wagnerian singer, seems to have had an off-day when she sang this scene (Decca 25120); there are some beautiful tones but her treatment of the whole shows none of the imagination that her voicing of Isolde's *Narrative and Curse* conveys. Her finale is poorly prepared, hence badly focused and clipped.

Some Acoustic Records

It remains to speak of several acoustic recordings of famous singers of the past. Destinn's version, issued once by the International Record Collectors' Club (disc 184), has its attributes from the vocal aspect, but I, for one, do not regard the recording as one of her finest mementoes. Fremstad's performance (old Columbia A5281 or IRCC 21) is not, in my estimation, a valuable souvenir of that great artist (as I recall it, Fremstad sang Venus rather than Elisabeth); the chief fault with her recording is a tendency toward sharpness in pitch. Jeritza's version (Victor 688), on the other hand, is too hoydenish for my liking; and even so, one felt she repressed herself considerably when essaying the role of Elisabeth. Although Farrar recorded the *Prayer*, she unfortunately

never rendered *Dich teure Halle* on records.

Miss Farrar did however make part of the duet that which follows *Dich teure Halle*. To be sure it is only a small part (one side of a 10-inch disc), but since it was recorded at Berlin in 1906 it represents her artistry at an early date. She sings with youthful fervor and sweetness of tone and the recording has become a valued souvenir to many of her admirers. Her excellent partner was Karl Joern.

The scene toward the end of Act 2 where Elisabeth protects Tannhaeuser from the anger of the Knights has been superbly sung by Mueller. *Zurueck von ihm!* is a dramatic expostulation which requires a good semblance of Wagner's orchestration to make it truly effective. Gadski's early recording (IRCC 121) illustrates the dramatic command of a scene which she could convey, but the feeble orchestra destroys the illusion. IRCC's re-pressing of this scene, however, offers the soprano's voicing of Elisabeth's confusion and confession of her love to Tannhaeuser after their greeting at the beginning of the act —*Verzieht wenn ich nicht weiss*. Hence this disc gives two interesting aspects of the soprano's conception of the role. That splendid artist, Emmy Bettendorf (who has been rightly or wrongly characterized as a German Muzio) once recorded *Zurueck von ihm!* with a chorus which permitted the inclusion of the ensemble following, *Ein Engel stieg aus* (Parlophone E11255). Bettendorf was a noted Elisabeth, and her singing on this disc matches her splendid singing of Senta's ballad. Baeumer's version (Decca 25120), although unevenly sung, nonetheless owns some compelling moments.

Elisabeth's Prayer

The original Elisabeth, Wagner's niece Johanna Wagner, seems to have been unable to render the *Prayer* in the third act as the composer wished it done, with the result that after the first performance he made a large cut in it. Such an action on the part of the composer set a precedent, a precedent observed in most of the recorded versions. When poorly sung, the *Prayer* can prove a rather lengthy affair. It should be sung simply and lyrically,

like a quiet song by Schubert—for here Wagner is assuredly Schubertian. On the stage, the *Prayer* should never be cut. But Wagner was undoubtedly wise; if the singer cannot do justice to it, the less she does the less protracted the *Prayer* will seem. Of course, the use of the cut in recording was due to exigencies of space rather than to inability on the part of the singer.

I never heard Farrar sing Elisabeth, but judging from her recording of the *Prayer* (Victor 88053 — 1907) hers must have been at that time a portrayal of considerable appeal. There is a plangent sweetness to the voice, a true Schubertian lyricism, and an appropriate suggestion of girlish simplicity. Destinn's version (Victor 6085) illustrates her skill in sustained song, but her physical vibrancy does not convey the type of devotional feeling one expects of Elisabeth. The singing of Jeritza (Victor 6694) is tonally constricted and completely lacking in the requisite humility. The above are all excised versions of the *Prayer*.

Lehmann's Art

It is to be regretted that Lotte Lehmann's rendition of the *Prayer* (reverse face of her *Dich teure Halle*) is cut and that the balance between the singer and the orchestra is not better; for Lehmann extracts the fullest poetic meaning out of the words and music. Despite its shortcomings, her record is an impressive souvenir of a great artist in her prime. Maria Mueller's Elisabeth is a full-blooded creature, and her singing of the *Prayer* is both fervent and devotional. The division of sides in the Bayreuth set finds her version unfortunately split between two discs. (nos. 67911/12D). Flagstad's recording (Victor 8920) is also divided, but on one disc. Only Lemnitz, through the consideration of Polydor, sings the complete *Prayer* on one side of a disc (reverse face of her *Dich teure Halle*). There is nobility in Flagstad's singing and considerable tonal beauty, but her Elisabeth to me remains almost too chaste and forbidding (suggesting an uncompromising Methodist at heart). There is an appropriate simplicity and tranquility of utterance in Lemnitz's singing, and also a rare purity and sweet-

ness of tone, but not quite enough dramatic contrast.

Lohengrin

Lohengrin is a deeply symbolical drama. The *Prelude* is one of those pieces in which Wagner comes closest to perfection, both in idea and in execution. In the concert hall, this *Prelude* emerges as an impressive tone poem; in the theatre, it establishes the mood of the drama—the aura of mysticism which hovers over the whole story. The character of Elsa is not far removed from Elisabeth; her inability to refrain from asking the fatal question is an old theme in folklore, traceable back to Greek times. Liszt has said of Elsa that she "attracts us more than any other member of this family of fair inquisitives, by reason of her artless purity and the fervent, humble self-abandonment of her love . . . it is only the dread of losing her bridegroom that casts her into frenzy, rebellion, and perjury." Wagner tells us that "the whole interest of *Lohengrin* consists in an inner working within the heart of Elsa, involving every secret of the soul: the endurance of a spell of wondrous power for blessing, that fills her whole surrounding with the most persuasive sense of truth, hangs solely on her refraining from the question as to its *Whence*." To portray successfully the character of Elsa, the singer must convey to an audience this "inner working"; she is a woman inspired by a "belief," for to her the inner vision of her Knight is more real than all the outward menace of her enemies. Of all the Elsas that I have heard none has portrayed the role more sympathetically and comprehendingly than Lotte Lehmann. Again it is her unique gift for extracting the utmost poetry from the text and music that makes her Elsa so appealing. To be sure, Lotte Lehmann's Elsa no longer owns the magic that it once commanded, but in her prime her singing of this role was an inimitable as it was almost perfect. I remember some acoustic Polydor records of this singer I acquired in Europe in the early 1920s; they immediately cast a spell over me. Here was an artist who sang with extraordinary feeling and understanding. It was incomprehensible that it took another

decade for her to be heard in opera in the United States.

Despite the fact that the orchestral part of Lotte Lehmann's recordings of *Elsa's Dream* and her *Song to the Breezes* (Odeon 4819; Columbia G4066M; Decca 20282) is sadly deficient, her singing remains more satisfactory to me than that in any other recording of either scene. Lehmann's performance of the *Dream* is paced slightly faster than most sing it, but it is not too fast. Her singing of the section beginning "In lichter Waffen Scheine ein Ritter nahe da" conveys her ecstatic belief in the wondrous power of her Knight. Contrast her singing of this section with the luscious beauty of Lemnitz (Decca-Polydor LY-6144); vocally the latter is superior, but her slow pacing of this section does not own the same dramatic uplift, moreover it prevents her from including the final section of the scene in her recording.

Elsa's Dream, as heard in the opera house, is in three sections, interspersed with exclamations from the chorus and a parley between the King and Frederick. In the concert hall and on records, the sections are drawn together to present an unbroken continuity. Similarly, in the opera house, the *Song to the Breezes* is given dramatic emphasis by the ejaculations of Orrud and Frederick under the balcony where Elsa stands. Both so-called arias lose in dramatic significance apart from the *mise-en-scène*.

An Abridged Lohengrin

About 15 years ago, Polydor brought out an abridged version of *Lohengrin* with Beate Malkin as Elsa (the set was re-issued here by Brunswick around 1931 — discs 90011/14). There was much to be said in favor of this performance—among other things Malkin's singing was commendable—but the excisions made in the score were not successful enough to disguise the surgeon's knife, and the timing of the performance was often badly realized, one felt that much was hastened to get the work to fit into a given space. Nor was the balance between the singers and the orchestra really satisfactory.

Of the older recordings of *Elsa's Dream*, there is one by Emma Juch, with piano accompaniment (Victor 74014 — 1904),

which has long been a valued collectors' item. It is true that the feeble piano accompaniment is but a travesty, yet the singing of the noted American soprano reveals much tonal beauty, and the record remains a fine memento of her artistry. IRCC re-pressed this record once (no. 23). Fremstad's version (reverse of her *Dich teure Halle*) has some lovely moments; the singer's imagination in such a role stood her in good stead, but here again her tones are often on the sharp side. Gadski's Elsa was over-deliberate, and as admirable as her singing of the *Dream* (Victor 88038—1907) remains, I do not think it suggests truly Elsa's ecstatic feelings.

There is much to admire in Elisabeth Rethberg's version of the *Dream* (Victor 6831); she sings with conviction and admirable musicianship, but the healthy well-being of her Elsa does not incite as much sympathy as Lehmann's does. Traubel evidences little understanding of the character of Elsa in her recording (Victor 16345), her singing is strident and her orchestral background poorly conducted. Flagstad, on the other hand, sings beautifully (Victor 14181); there is a majestic sweep to her portrayal of the *Dream*, but her Elsa is too earthbound and lacking in true sentient warmth. Had her orchestral accompaniment been richer and fuller (it is obviously a "dead" studio recording), her version might well have more appeal, for a voice as large as hers needs a full, rich instrumental background.

In Other Tongues

Elsa's Dream has been sung in other languages by French, Italian and English singers. Wagner in French or Italian never sounds quite right to me. Both Ninon Vallin and Suzanne Balguerie have made versions in French. Margherita Sheridan, Maria Caniglia and Nellie Melba have recorded it in Italian. Melba's version (H.M.V. DB336) owns interest; it recalls the fact that Melba had aspirations as a Wagnerian singer but in her one attempt failed dismally to attain her goal. Her recording is definitely attractive; it is backed up by her fine singing of the *Willow Song* from *Otello*.

Of the several recordings of the duet

between Elsa and Lohengrin in Scene 3 of the first act, the most satisfactory one is undeniably H.M.V. disc DB4400, sung by Wittrisch, Heiderbach and Domgraf-Fassbaender. This recording begins with the choral passage at the opening of Scene 3 and extends through the choral passage prior to Lohengrin's challenge to Frederick. There is much to be said for the passage from the duet (beginning "Wenn ich im Kampfe fuer dich siege"), sung by Alfred Piccaver and Margit Angerer, for Piccaver was an admirable Lohengrin in his time. (Polydor 66833).

As far as realism in reproduction is concerned, Flagstad's recording of Elsa's *Song to the Breezes* (Victor 1901) tops all others, but there is more of Isolde and Bruennhilde in Flagstad's superb singing than of Elsa. Lemnitz's version (reverse of her *Dream*) is faultlessly voiced; it is one of this artist's finest recordings. Nevertheless, I recommend Lehmann's version above all others, if one can obtain a decent Decca pressing (a bad pressing tends to distort the voice, a distortion due probably as much to a worn matrix as to the quality of the record material).

An Ungrateful Duet

The scene between Elsa and Ortrud that follows does not emerge successfully in the opera house, but to call the Bettendorf-Branzell performance (Parlophone E10852; Decca 25051) a "lame" one is unjust. The recording, which must be nearly fifteen years old, is surprisingly good for its period, but the microphone technique of that time demanded that singers turn aside from the "mike" to avoid explosive effects. Neither Bettendorf nor Branzell is to be blamed for the explosive effects heard in their singing here; these are the fault of the recording. Bettendorf offers many expressive moments in her voicing of Elsa's phrases and Branzell is an effective Ortrud. Yvonne Brothier and Marjorie Lawrence recorded this scene at a later date (circa 1934) for French H.M.V. (DB4890/91). This version takes in more of the scene than the one above; it is, however, sung in French.

Of the several recordings of the *Love Duet* from the Bridal Chamber Scene, the most desirable is the one made at Bay-

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reuth by Maria Mueller and Franz Voelker (Telefunken SK B2052). True, the scene is incomplete, (it terminates at the end of Lohengrin's aria *Athmest du nicht mit mir die süessen Duefte?*), but vocally and histrionically these singers are both ideally suited to the roles. Lemnitz and Torsten Ralf have also recorded the same portion of the duet on Electrola DB4667, but I have never heard this disc. Ralf, however, is hardly in the same class with Voelker as a singer. The old recording by Bettendorf and Melchior (Parlophone E10515-10527-10540; Decca 25384/5/6), a complete version of the Bridal Chamber Scene, has much in its favor even though the orchestral part of the picture is poorly defined. Both Bettendorf and Melchior were vocally in their prime when they made this recording (circa 1926 or 27), and one finds their projection of the scene emotionally and dramatically telling. The recording needs to be played at 80 r.p.m.

to do it justice. The recent version (excised) of the Bridal Chamber Scene, made by Flagstad and Melchior (Victor set 897), finds Melchior no longer a convincing Lohengrin and Flagstad miscast as Elsa (she was never regarded favorably in this role while at the Metropolitan); moreover the orchestral accompaniment despite modern recording is treated merely as a background to the singing. There are several versions of this scene which I have never heard, and therefore cannot comment upon. Not having any great admiration for Carl Hartmann and Elisabeth Friedrich I have never felt an urge to hear their recording (Parlophone R1491/2), and not caring for the music sung in French I likewise have never had any desire to hear the Germaine Martinelli-Georges Thill version (French Columbia LX651/2).

(To be continued)

SOME RECORDINGS OF 1943

Looking back over the year's output of recordings, one is made painfully conscious of what the Petrillo ban has done. The shortage of shellac would undoubtedly have curtailed the production of new recordings had the ban not existed, but one feels that the companies might have issued a number of new things that would have merited praise. Columbia has been the most progressive of all the domestic companies during the past year, and one welcomes its decision to re-issue some of its fine sets—which by and large are definitely qualified to be termed "record classics." Not a few of these re-issues proved to be real highlights of the year. Scraping the bottom of the barrel, so to speak, has made it necessary for the companies to place more emphasis on many recordings than they might have done in normal times. Considering the war, the unfortunate ban on recording (which to date has apparently been ignored by Washington), and the commercialism that has

always dominated the trade, one feels the record companies deserve to be praised for their valiant efforts to meet present exigencies.

A number of requests, as well as the fact that many new readers have come to us in the past year, prompts us to consider the highlights, as we see them, month by month for 1943.

January. No recordings were issued by the large companies for this month. Our reviews dealt with the output of Co-Art, a California concern made up of a group of mutually admiring American composers and musicians, and with a group of Scriabin recordings released by Paraclete. Of the latter, only the *Sonata No. 8, Op. 66*, played by Yolanda Bolotine, emerges as a worthy interpretation. Of the Co-Art releases, there are two we would like to mention again. Adolph Weiss' *Three Movements for Wind Quintet* (discs 5016/17) remains an interesting example of the twelve-tone scale technique which

Schoenberg promulgated. The other work is a recording of Franck's early *Trio in F sharp minor, Op. 1* (not an important score) (Co-Art set M or Dm-2); it is commendable solely for the splendid playing of the Compinsky Trio and the extraordinarily clear recording.

February. Barbirolli's performance of Sibelius' *First Symphony* (Columbia set 532) was praised for the conductor's youthful elation and fervor. There is more stimulation in this reading than in any other, and the recording is unusually clear and clean. The Stuyvesant Quartet's performance of Shostakovich's *Quartet* (Columbia set X-231) was the real highlight of the month. This work can hardly be rated highly (it is more of a chamber suite than a quartet), but the music does grow on one.

March. Beecham's performance of the Sibelius *Sevenths* (Columbia 524) was a disappointment; the reproduction was bad. The Golschmann set issued in February (Victor 922), was better recorded, but there the reading was a disappointment. Stokowski's *Fourth* electrical recording of Stravinsky's *Fire Bird Suite* (Victor 933) had its praiseworthy qualities, but many of us found after its release that the conductor's 1936 version with the Philadelphia Orchestra was far more realistic and hence preferable. The Schumann *Quintet, Op. 44*, as played by the Busch Quartet and Rudolf Serkin (Columbia 533), was assailed by those who do not admire the musicianship of the Busch ensemble. To our way of thinking, this performance is more in the spirit of Schumann than any other available. Our preference among all recorded versions of the quintet, however, remains the Schnabel-Pro Arte performance (Victor 267). Continental, one of the smaller companies, issued an album of Bela Bartok (set 102), which brought us face to face with one of the strangest and most powerful personalities of our day. The set offers a well chosen group of Bartok's piano works from 1908 up to the present, and the fact that all are played by Bartok (in some pieces on the last record the composer is joined by his wife) lends importance to the release. Marian Anderson's recording of *Let Us Break Bread Together* and *Oh, What a Beautiful*

City was sung with fine feeling and sincerity (Victor 10-1040); this disc deserves to be remembered. The Paul Robeson album, *Songs of Free Men* (Columbia 534), was timely, but not all the material stands repetition well. The interested reader is referred to our original review.

April. The feature set of the month was a re-issue by Columbia (album 300) of Mahler's greatest work, *Das Lied von der Erde*. Many readers have written us that they obtained this set prior to its re-issue without any notes in the album. We have been asked repeatedly where one can acquire translations of the songs. Our suggestion would be to write the Columbia Recording Corp., Bridgeport, Conn. and request the right to purchase the empty album of the re-issue with the excellent notes of Nicholas Slonimsky; the original German words and the English translation are provided in these notes, which are pasted to the inside covers of the album. Victor's issue of Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*, in the performance of Schnabel and the Chicago Symphony (set 939), still strikes us as one of the foremost releases of the year; we still regard this performance as in every way preferable to Schnabel's earlier English-made one. Columbia's issue of Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto* (it has been called a concerto for piano and trumpet) (set 527) remains more interesting for its splendid performance by Eileen Joyce and the Halle Orchestra, under the expert direction of the late Leslie Heward, than for its music. The work is clever but trite, and Shostakovich's nose-thumbing suggests more the precocious urchin than the mature composer of the *Fifth* and *Sixth Symphonies*. Eleanor Steber's singing of arias from Haydn's *The Creation* and Handel's *The Messiah* (Victor set 927) represent a growing artist, one to be watched closely; and Novotna's singing of a group of folk songs of Czechoslovakia, issued under the atrocious label of *Songs of Lidice* (Victor 936), offers some appreciable material which deserves to be more widely known.

May. Disappointing as a recording, but laudable as a performance, was the Mitropoulos-Minneapolis set (Columbia 528) of the Borodin *Symphony in B minor*.

The American Music Lover

Griffes' *Poem for Flute and Orchestra* (Victor 11-8349) grows on one with repeated hearings; it is not great music, but is a type of sensitive poetic expression that repays acquaintance. Columbia's re-issue of Prokofieff's *Violin Concerto No. 1* (set 244) called attention again to a truly great modern work, in an incomparably fine performance by Szigeti, Beecham and the London Philharmonic. The Budapest Quartet performance of Beethoven's *E flat Quartet, Op. 127* (Columbia set 537) was justly hailed. Finally, there was the recording of *Ab! fors' è lui* from *La Traviata* (the complete scene) (Columbia 71451-D), sung with rare musical insight and true tonal loveliness by Bidu Sayao. This would have been rated the best electrical version in our operatic survey, had it been issued in time.

June. Columbia's re-issue of the Busch Chamber Players' performances of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* gave record critics an opportunity to repeat superlatives. The Koussevitzky - Boston Symphony set of Fauré's incidental music to *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Victor 941) was a welcome addition to the French side of our record library. The quiet beauty of this music and the originality of its melodic content deserves our respect; only the unimaginative disparage Fauré. The Mitropoulos-Minneapolis performance of Mendelssohn's *Scotch Symphony* (Columbia set 504) still appeals to us more for its imaginative treatment of the score than does the better recorded version of Iturbi and the Rochester Philharmonic. Tschaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* Victor (set 940) was an example of a recording official's poor choice of an interpreter. Toscanini has played this score, and Toscanini alone should have recorded it. The work is not one of the composer's best, and Sevitzky at far too many points makes us aware of this fact. The recording of Corelli's *Concerto in C major*, played by E. Power Biggs and Arthur Fiedler's *Sinfonietta* (Victor set 942) was a valued addition to the meager group of 17th and early 18th-century chamber orchestral works. And Petri's splendid renditions of several Bach-Busoni Chorale-Preludes (Columbia 71463-D) merited our applause. Finally, the album of *Gregorian Chant*, sung by

the Choir of the Benedictine Monks of Saint Benoit du Lac, Canada (issued by McLaughlin and Reilly Co., Boston), deserves to be remembered; the singing of the monks is richly resonant. Let us repeat: "The quiet, austere beauty of this music can be appreciated as much for itself as for its devotional significance."

July. The Best set of Grieg's *Ballade in G minor, Op. 24* (album BA-6) was an important contribution to the Grieg Centenary. Stell Anderson plays well, and the recording, though at a low level, offers good piano reproduction. Columbia's set of Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* (no. 539) illustrated the womanly tenderness which Lotte Lehmann can bring to such lieder; unfortunately only the singer's contribution is appreciable: Bruno Walter's piano accompaniments are badly played and recorded; in one place he plays a chord too soon and repeats it with the voice. Victor's recording of the Bridal Chamber Scene from *Lohengrin* (set 897) found both Flagstad and Melchior miscast in the role of the youthful lovers. A curious memento of Lillian Russell showed up in July (issued by the Collectors Record Shop of New York); the sweetness of her voice was noted in an atrocious song called *Come Down Ma Evenin' Star*.

August. Monteux's performance of d'Indy's *Symphony in B flat, Op. 57* (Victor set 943) added an important work to the French side of our library. American critics have never been kind to this work, but we believe it deserves better treatment; it is not an easy score to apprehend fully but its nobility and loftiness repay rehearing. Brahms' *Viola Sonata in F minor, Op. 120* is not a work for everyone; too few understand or appreciate the reflective qualities of the composer's late chamber works. We still find the Samuel Lipschey and Petri interpretation a praiseworthy one. Lotte Lehmann's singing of two songs of Wagner—*Im Treibhaus* and *Traeume* (Columbia 71469-D) — remains unsurpassed. No one brings the warmly human qualities to these lieder that she does.

September. This was a disappointing month. Serkin's lugubrious performance of the *Moonlight Sonata* revealed again that eminent artists are apt to be poor

critics of their own endeavors. And Bampton's singing of *Donna Anna's* great arias from *Don Giovanni* showed her vocally and temperamentally unsuited to the role.

October. Monteux's recording of Lalo's *Le Roi d'Ys Overture* (Victor 11-8489) was a welcome addition to recorded French music. And the Bost set (no. ES-4) of *Latin-American Folk Dances* was an estimable release of its kind. The feature set of the month was the performance of Beethoven's *Archduke Trio, Op. 97*, played by Rubinstein, Heifetz and Feuermann (Victor set 949). The performance is admirable in almost every way, but the recording remains a problem, because of shattering of the piano tone on many outfits. The real highlight of the month, however, was the Harvard performance of *Processional and Ceremonial Music* by the noted 16th century composer, Giovanni Gabrieli. Despite poor balance in reproduction and some incomprehensible excisions in the music, these works remain among the most impressive music of its kind available on records.

November. A re-issue of a Delius album by Columbia was accorded a lukewarm reception by the press; but at this late date admirers of Delius' music seem hardly to need endorsement of it by reviewers. Delius' music, despite the criticism of those who dislike it, continually finds new adherents. The highlight of this month was the beautifully played performance by Szegedi and Foldes of Schubert's misnamed *Sonatina in D major, Op. 137, No. 1* (Columbia set X-238). The Busch Quartet reading of Beethoven's *F major Quartet, Op. 59, No. 1* (Columbia set 543) was unjustly criticized by many. To many reviewers dismiss a performance without paying any regard to musicianship. We still think this is one of the best performances that the Busch Quartet have realized on Columbia records. For those who like French music hall songs, the album called *Moulin Rouge* (after the famous French establishment) is the best thing of its kind accomplished to date (Bost set BA-7). And, though unevenly recorded, Beecham's set of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* (Columbia set 538) emerges as the best performance this con-

ductor has achieved with the N. Y. Philharmonic.

December. Victor's album (953) featuring Caruso and famous Metropolitan singers of the past in operatic ensembles had no competition; it shone in lonely splendor in a month which strangely offered no new releases.

Book Review

RISE TO FOLLOW. By Albert Spalding. Henry Holt and Company, 1943. 328 pages. Price \$3.50.

▲ Thirty years ago Albert Spalding first crossed my childhood horizon. My violin instructor urged me to hitch my wagon to this bright American star, a son of wealth who might have been a playboy but through talent and hard work had already risen to a point near the zenith of his art. Moreover, unlike the virtuoso who insists on quiet when he signs his name so he can concentrate on that difficult task, Spalding was a cultured gentleman, I was told.

That is quite obvious to anyone who reads this autobiography, the most engaging book I have come across this year.

Albert Spalding is as cosmopolitan as western civilization. Born in Chicago of parents who gave their address as New York City, much of his youth was spent in Florence, Italy. At the age of 14 he was graduated from the Bologna Conservatory with the highest honors achieved by anyone since Mozart. Two years later he made an auspicious débüt in Paris. In most years since then he has played more than a hundred concert engagements.

Across these pages, piling up one exciting, enjoyable anecdote after another, appear Joachim, Battistini, Casals, Walter Damrosch, Gabrilowitsch, De Reszke, Dohnanyi, Elman, Muck, Auer, Heifetz, Patti, Respighi, Nordica, Saint-Saëns, Sibelius, Thibaud, Ysaye, royalty, peasants, radio announcers, concert managers, and many other colorful persons. This is the meat of the book.

In the early days of the phonograph Mr. Spalding was under contract with the

(Continued on page 140)

The American Music Lover



TROPICAL SOUL DANCES

FORD A. GARROW

Since music has recorded in all ages the measure of a country's social and cultural refinement, the *danza* speaks well for the esthetic development of the island of Puerto Rico, where Creole culture has intermingled with that of old Castile. Not to be confused with the tune called the *danzón* as in Cuba, the *danza* is a typically Puerto Rican development and it is seldom that it is heard outside the island.

The origin of the *danza* is hazy. The generally accepted contention of Puerto Ricans is that it originated in a certain form of tango, poor in rhythm and colorless in melody, which was introduced to the island by the Spanish Loyalists who fled from Venezuela after that country, under Simon Bolivar, declared its independence from Spain in 1821.

Among the refugees were many highly cultured dilettantes of music who introduced their homeland melodies to the island. This imported music was in reality the *danzón*, but under the influence of Manuel Tavarez (1843-83) who raised the music to a higher artistic level, it gradually evolved into a typically Puerto Rican

style. Tavarez' early *danzas* might be called younger sisters of Schubert's *Moments Musicaux* and Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*.

For the *danza's* complete development and typically local expression, which makes it so unusual, credit is due Julian Andino, who in 1870 brought about its rhythmic transformation. In his *La Margarita*, his initial composition, Andino employed what is called the *tresillo elástico*, since its measure cannot be precise.

In the *danza* it is necessary to draw one note out more than another, conventionally. And from this springs the veritable creole rhythm. The melody is exceedingly sweet and serene in the introduction of the first part, called the *paseo*. It has a quality both poetic and aloof, with a touch of Spanish dignity. The second part is generally spirited to the point of crying out with an acute crescendo seeming to rebel against being sad and poor and not being free. At times it is a deep lament and again, it cries forth in sharp protest. Then it contrives to conquer itself with a noble resolution as it becomes resigned

and seemingly convinced of the futility of lifting a voice so stifled with loneliness and indifference. It meditates upon its hopelessness and anguish in a tone which, though major, does not cease to be mournful and proud until it ends with the initial phrase, returning inexorably to complete the circle. The *danza* is unique as a musical interpretation having no relation to the various other types of music common to the various countries of Latin America and the West Indies.

The *danza*, like its Cuban counterpart the *danzón*, is in 2/4 meter. The introduction usually eight measures in length is generally repeated; this is followed by a sixteen measure section at a tempo which may be slightly slower than the introduction. Repetition of the latter then follows and this in turn gives way to another new section the melody of which is generally in notes of longer value than those in the preceding sections. This, of course, gives the feeling of a slower tempo, but actually the timing is the same. The *danza* may have four interspersed sections, or more, the pattern usually being A-B-A-C-A-D-A, etc."

Just before the Spanish-American War, as a result of which Puerto Rico became a part of the United States, Juan Morell Campos, an exceedingly adept Puerto Rican composer, came forth to win musical distinction for his transformation and amplification of this popular island music. Succeeding Tavarez, he is now looked upon as the Puerto Rican Johann Strauss. As the noted Viennese amplified the waltz pattern in such a revolutionary manner, so did Morell Campos inject fresh new harmonic breath, deeper melodic variety and feeling into the Puerto Rican *danza*, developing it to a point unsurpassed in beauty of its kind. Campos sought out and found a democratic idiom; the *danza* became the heart of the crowd.

His *danzas* are tormented and vigorous and they seem to the listener to utter forth in their own voice the feelings of a people who had never known complete happiness.*

Campos sought to variate the patterns of the *danza*, according to Prof. Augusto A. Rodriguez of the University of Puerto Rico, to express "his innermost sentiments, his griefs, his enjoyments, his humor and his impossible love in the typical musical form called the *danza puertorriqueña*." Thus, his conceptions aim to be true expression "in the art form of a region of being agitated by passion and love."

During the first part of the *danza*, before the couples embrace to dance in consort, they walk slowly and solemnly until the change of tempo of the music permits them to light embrace common to all modern dances. The *danza* is sonorous. It is not a ritual, pantomimic or gymnastic dance. To those who witness it for the first time it seems a dance of the soul rather than the body.

The Puerto Rican national anthem *La Borinqueña* is a *danza* and is loved by all Puerto Ricans and others who have heard its soul-stirring melody. The memory carried longest in the minds of visitors to the island is the impressive sight of the United States Army band lined up on the wharf playing *La Borinqueña* as the steamer gently breaks the paper streamers and slowly slides out into the bay on its homeward voyage to the States. To hear the sad, yet lively, lament drift across the intervening waters until the steamer rounds a bend and heads out into the Atlantic is a never-to-be-forgotten experience. It is heart-rending in that it seems that the soul of an entire island is in that haunting melody and it is crying out in vain for a better life wherein man can live and raise his family free from the continual fear of want and hunger and nature's devastation.



*J. M. Sanromá, the Puerto Rican pianist, has recorded an album of eight *Danzas* by Campos (Victor set 849—issued in April, 1942). Much of the color of these pieces is lost on the piano; the *danza* is played to better advantage by a native orchestra. (They are played occasionally by the U.

S. Army band at San Juan. But when played by a band the *danza* is changed in character so that it is more like a march.) The native music has felt no encroachment by American swing, and if the island remains under U. S. rule for the next 100 years, one will probably still hear the *guicharo* being played in the mountains of Puerto Rico.



BACH, BRONTE, AND STOKOWSKI

Coincidences are generally conceded to be the special province of fiction writers. Yet there are times when a series of things happen in life that can be classified in no other category than that of the coincidence. Thus, a recent letter from a reader, a short article from Mr. d'Esterre in England, Stokowski's return as conductor of the NBC Symphony, the receipt at Christmas of new editions of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (published by Random House with splendid illustrations from wood engravings by Fritz Eichenberg), and lastly the forthcoming moving-picture version of *Jane Eyre*, with music by the young American composer-conductor Bernard Herrmann, all tie up with each other. To be sure, Mr. d'Esterre's article was penned in 1934, but since it was only brought to our attention recently, it fits into the pattern of coincidences.

Let us start with the letter, which is from Mr. S. H. Hemenway of Swarthmore, Pa. It reads:

"My favorite conductor is Stokowski [he spells the name in capitals and adds several asterisks]. If I could be as objective about him as you are, I would not enjoy life half as much as I do now. What conductor and orchestra presented the best New York programs last winter on the radio, the best-chosen, the most distinguished programs, interpreted in the most artistic way? Stokowski and the NBC Symphony! What conductor gave the most impressive radio performance of Shostakovich's *Seventh Symphony*? Stokowski! (He made it *sound*). What was New York's leading orchestra last winter, anyway? Like all geniuses, Stokowski will be

appreciated *after* his death. But I recognize the truth of what you say."

Mr. Hemenway's last sentence is somewhat puzzling. It is to be admitted that Stokowski provides interesting radio programs; his inclusion of modern works in his broadcasts gives the vast radio audience an opportunity to hear them under the best circumstances. One either likes or dislikes the eroticism he injects into Bach and Wagner. Mr. Hemenway's endorsement of Stokowski represents his own view — one that he is entitled to. There are others who feel exactly the same way about Toscanini, Koussevitzky, Beecham and Walter.

As for the new editions of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, they are hardly relevant to the musical side of our argument, but they deserve to be mentioned. These stories never grow old; each succeeding generation reads them with new interest. The moving picture of *Jane Eyre* undoubtedly will attain considerable popularity. Mr. Hermann's music has already been praised by many who have heard it. Unfortunately for Mr. Hermann, music is only incidental to a moving picture, and the greater part of the moving picture public are unaware of its intrinsic worth.

Mr. d'Esterre's short article, which falls into two sections, comes last. It is, of course, a personal experience and a personal viewpoint, but it is one with which we concur, in part. Neither Mr. Hemenway nor Mr. d'Esterre had anything to do with their respective observations on similar subjects dovetailing with each other. What part chance played in all this,

we'll leave the reader to decide. (We must admit we could not resist tying these concurrent events together. Editor are made that way.)

Mr. d'Esterre Speaks

I.

Mounting a long stone staircase, I found myself in the Upper Circle of the old Royalty Theatre in Dean Street, Soho (London), where I occupied a seat, and prepared to witness the tragedy of the Brontës upon the stage. In England, however, the play is preceded by music, and there is music between the acts. In most English theatres the playgoer, awaiting the rise of the curtain, becomes aware of a piano, a violin or two, and maybe a clarinet, making disjointed rhythmical sounds, which filter to the ears through the clamor of conversation. Occasionally it is possible to recognize the piece that is being played, and the piece more often than not is one which demands a large orchestra for its proper performance.

The Royalty Theatre saved the situation, in a manner of speaking, by employing a gramophone. Recognition of the fact was instantaneous on my part, and so was recognition of the recording—Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski. (I say Bach's *Toccata and Fugue*, but actually it is Stokowski's arrangement of Bach's music.) Any doubt I may have harbored as to the nature of the performance was dispelled by the interruption in the middle of the piece for turning the record over. A loud tone steel needle was used, as far as I could judge, and most of the music reached me clearly above the clamor of voices; and it confirmed, coming at me as it did in an unfamiliar environment, a long established conviction that this handling of the work was totally foreign to Bach's conception of it, both as an organ piece, and as an expression of poetry. It is advisedly that I employ the term "totally," for not a single phrase in the work, as it seems to me, comes out appropriately. Bach is sacrificed in this interpretation at the altar of orchestral virtuosity.

There is this, however, to be said for

the Stokowski recording performed on this particular occasion — it infuses the work with something of the spirit of *Wuthering Heights*. One is conscious of the heavy tread of Heathcliff, and of his remorseless implacable personality. The authentic work possesses no such character; it is the massed strings and more particularly the trombones of the Philadelphia Orchestra that work the metamorphosis. Still, it is not through a violent misinterpretation of Bach that I would seek my way to the soul of Heathcliff, and of the wonderful and tragic woman who created him.

Between Acts I and II came *Finlandia* (also Stokowski-Philadelphia), and the subsequent intervals were filled by fragments of the *Siegfried Idyll* (Bruno Walter-Vienna Philharmonic), chosen possibly as suggestive of the gentler Charlotte, but turned on very much at random. What, if anything, connected with the ladies of Haworth Parsonage *Finlandia* was supposed to represent, I am quite unable to surmise.

II.

When the Stokowski recordings first began to appear a few years ago, they took the world of gramaphonists by storm; for there had been nothing comparable up to that time in orchestral recording. But since that time a great deal has come to us from other fine orchestras, and from conductors who approach the interpretation of music in a manner quite different from Stokowski's. I admire Stokowski very much, and would not hesitate to name him among the greatest living conductors; but, after hearing many interpretations of his, mostly of thoroughly familiar works, I would suggest that, while he is a past-master of exquisite detail, he does not always succeed in getting a comprehensive view of the work. Shall I say that, while clarity in detail is perfected in his interpretations, while phrasing is brought to the highest pitch of excellence, and each separate expression in a given work is defined with a sharpness unmatched elsewhere, the total result is often rather meaningless? Well, I have said it, and it is really what I feel.

(Continued on page 140)

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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

NELLIE MELBA AND HER RECORDS

By Stephan Fassett

The aim of the department will be to recommend recordings that are believed to be of permanent interest to the true connoisseur of fine singing and that are—for one reason or another—worthy examples of the singer's artistry. To make a complete collection of recordings by any of the famous artists who recorded acoustically, offers no guarantee of consistently fine singing. Indeed, noted critics and discerning vocal teachers have found in many recordings, by the most famous singers, vocal inequalities and evidences of careless musicianship. Therefore, to choose carefully the best recordings by famous singers would seem to be more advisable, for through such a collection one may be assured of hearing the artists at their recorded best.



Most authorities accept the date of Nellie Melba's birth in Melbourne, Australia, as May 19, 1861, but there are some who contend that she was born in 1859 (a date I am inclined to accept). Her death occurred in Sydney on February 23, 1931.

Undeniably the most celebrated diva of her time, she occupied a position in the musical world comparable only to that held by Jenny Lind and Adelina Patti in former times, and by none in modern times. Such singers no longer exist. The name chosen by the noted Australian soprano (née Mitchell) as a tribute to her native city is still synonymous with perfect vocalism.

Melba's singing career outdistanced those of Lind and Patti; indeed, few women have had so long a string of artistic successes as she enjoyed. She sang her farewell to opera at Covent Garden, London, in 1926* (in her sixty-seventh year), and she occasionally gave concerts even after that. Her stage débüt, as Gilda in *Rigoletto*, took place on October 12, 1887, at the Theatre de la Monnaie, Brussels. Six years later, she sang at the Metropolitan Opera. In 1904, she made her

* At this time H.M.V. made a number of on-the-spot recordings of unique interest. Before the present war, an interesting coupling of Mimi's *Addio* from the third act of *La Bohème* and the singer's own tearful farewell speech was available on import (disc DB943).

first published recordings; from then onwards she recorded at fairly regular intervals through 1916, and after that at infrequent periods up to and including 1926.

The most widely known Melba recordings were made by Victor in New York and Camden. The first group of these was issued with considerable fanfare in 1907. When the soprano sang in New York that year, the eminent critic, W. J. Henderson, noted "a little deterioration in the voice. It had acquired a slightly acidulous quality. She was 46 years of age [48, according to our information] and the alteration in the voice was not a matter for wonder." Those who heard the singer then or afterwards, according to Henderson, "can have formed no true conception of her greatness."

This may be disappointing to admirers of the singer's recordings, but it is a fact that one should face. To expect recordings made by a woman in her late forties to exhibit the dazzling brilliance of her earlier years is hardly justified. That there was "a little deterioration" is certainly "not a matter for wonder." What is incredible, however, in the opinion of this listener in the year 1944, is the marvelous preservation of the voice. Listen to her 1907 version of *Caro nome* from *Rigoletto* (Victor 88078 or 6213), one of the most successful of all the Melba recordings, and you will hear a voice unlike anything that exists today. From top to bottom, the scale is perfectly even; the clean attack, the absolute steadiness and freedom from tremolo is particularly striking in these days of uncertain, wobbly sopranos; the tones are full and ravishing in quality; the trill must be heard to be believed. Such singing is a miracle, no matter what the age of the artist—and Melba was 48!

The passing years had little detrimental effect on Melba's voice; it continued to pour forth in a pure and undefiled stream of sound. Many of her recordings, undoubtedly made when she was physically at her best, convey a voice that one can hardly believe could have been finer. When she sang in New York in 1913, a leading critic, Richard Aldrich, wrote: "Mme. Melba is still in the plenitude of her voice... Her upper tones are not

quite what they were in power... nor can it be said that everything in her coloratura has the flawless perfection that was hers." Yet, as exhibited in the records of the aria from Mozart's *Il Re Pastore* (89074) which she made in that year, her scales and arpeggios were still limpid and fluent; her legato unimpaired, her trill, as always, uncanny in its luster and evenness. This was her last coloratura record—a worthy monument to Mme. Marchesi's careful training of a voice that nature had made well-nigh perfect. The records of 1915 and 1916, the last she made in America, show a slight ripple in the hitherto unruffled surface of her voice, so slight that it would only be noticed by those familiar with her earlier discs. Even by 1926, when Melba last sang for the gramophone, this had not become a noticeable flaw and at 67 the diva's voice still owned a tonal freshness that many a young soprano might envy. (What a contrast there last records offer to Patti's discs made when the latter was several years younger!) Few singers have aged as gracefully as did Dame Nellie.

Granted, then, that Melba's was an instrument of superlative merit used with consummate technical mastery and admirable musicianship; what of her interpretive powers? Here opinion is divided and the question is a difficult one to answer briefly. As an operatic artist Melba was a great singer, but she was by no means a good actress, since she never really got inside her rôles—at all times she was simply herself. She lacked passion and was often superficial in her conception of musical drama. But through the beauty of her voice and the freedom of her production she thrilled her audiences, who were only too happy to accept her as a diva without asking for anything more. Her repertoire was surprisingly varied, ranging from *Lucia* to *Aida*. In 1896, when she first sang Violetta in *Traviata* at the Metropolitan, she developed real pathos in the second act and touched the hearts of her hearers. She knew the value of understatement and refrained from the usual operatic hysterics.

The purity of her style was well suited to the concert hall. Aside from the inevitable arias and ballads, her programs were

sometimes distinguished by the presence of modern French songs, by such composers as Chausson, Hahn, Duparc, and Debussy. Judging from her recordings, she sang most of them with great skill and understanding. Hear her memorable interpretation of Chausson's moving *Le Temps des Lilas* on IRCC no. 7, recorded in 1913.

Melba was frequently accused of being passionless and her voice was often called cold. Oddly enough, Melba herself felt that her voice was boyish in quality (perhaps like a boy soprano) and she admired just that trait in it. Yet she cannot be dismissed as a mere super boy-soprano. Perhaps she conveyed emotion more often than she felt it. At any rate, her art remains the despair of the pigeon-holders. At its poignant best, it was ethereal, "out of this world," as we say now, and what may have moved some of her hearers most deeply was the very absence of the easily comprehended qualities of red-blooded, earthy passion which others complained they missed in her singing. After all, how many of us would appreciate the singing of an angel could we hear it? As a person, Melba was far from angelic, but surely there was something celestial in her singing.

We come now to the question that most concerns the present-day record connoisseur who, more likely than not, never heard Melba in person at all, let alone in her prime. How closely do the Melba records approximate her singing as it was at the time of recording? (During a period of 22 years, she made over a hundred records.) It may be fair to judge execution, style and interpretation by means of recordings, but tone quality is another matter. Emilio de Gogorza, the famous concert baritone who was employed by Victor in the early days to lure the great opera stars into singing for the phonograph, was present at many of Melba's recording sessions. He emphatically states that the true Melba voice was never captured on a disc. This is the sort of statement collectors hate to swallow, but swallow and digest it they must. Some voices recorded well, others did not. Often a singer would record well at one time and not at another. It is therefore unjust to

condemn the work of a famous artist on the basis of records alone, as collectors frequently do. But even if the best Melba records fail to do her complete justice, the fact still remains that there are good and bad Melba records and no one should pass judgment upon either the singer or her recordings without first making a careful study of a representative selection of them.

Theoretically, Melba's should have been a perfect recording voice. Why it was not, I do not pretend to know. One cannot listen to many of her discs without receiving the impression that something is wrong with the reproduction. The tones are usually pure enough, often remarkably pure, in fact, but at certain points in its compass the voice simply does not sound natural and human. For this reason, collectors sometimes refer to Melba as a "hooter," since her recorded voice often sounds "hooty." (To avoid this quality and to prevent blasting, the recording directors used sometimes to place the singer too far from the horn; this gave to the resultant sound a thin, distant quality.) That this "hooty" quality was due to the recording and not to the singer, is indicated by its absence from Melba's electrical recordings. For this reason, to the person wishing to obtain the fairest possible idea of Melba's recorded voice, I would recommend first Victor 6733, an electrical studio recording of 1926 on which she sings *Swing Low Sweet Chariot* with a tone so warm and human that it is impossible to believe that the soprano was then 67 years of age. Always keeping in mind the timbre revealed by this disc, let him then go back to her earlier records and work his way judiciously back to the starting point. On IRCC 5002 will be found an excerpt from *Les Huguenots* which was recorded during an actual Metropolitan performance in 1901. Mechanically atrocious, the record painfully discloses Melba's voice doing things with fire and brilliance she never did in any of her later commercial recordings.

Melba's first commercial discs were made in 1094 in London, where she also made more successful reproductions in 1905, and again in 1906. Of these, 24 were issued here by Victor in the 94,000 and

95,000 series, priced at \$4 and \$5 each. They were single-sided, of course. Outstanding because they give glimpses of vocal agility not to be found in any of her later discs, are Ardit's *Se Saran Rose* (95019) and Bemberg's *Nymphes et Sylvains* (95023 & IRCC 123), both of which are tossed off with a sparkle and verve missing in all her later work. The reproductions are poor and only the execution can be judged. A much clearer reproduction is the 1905 *Lo Hear the Gentle Lark* (95027) which makes interesting comparison with the American recordings of 1907 and 1910. The early version is definitely superior, having much more to offer in the way of trills.

Many critics have raved about her singing of the Mad Scene From *Thomas Hamlet*, and her recordings of it are highly valued by collectors. An English critic as late as 1913 said of her rendition of this scene: "Her opening revealed that beautifully contemplative tone to which the color of her voice was so well adopted... In the later and more dramatic paroxysms she rose to a great height, conveying the necessary emotional characteristics by subtlety rather than vigor." The 1904 version of this scene reveals greater vocal agility (Victor 95020/21), but the performance of 1907 (H.M.V. DB710—Victor 88069/70) is better recorded, and shows us why a critic could write the above lines. Aldrich has said that as admirable as her singing of the Mad Scenes from *Hamlet* and *Lucia* were (her recording of the latter is not in a class with the former; here the voice seems constricted at times), in neither did she equal the extraordinary exhibition she gave in *Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly* from Handel's *Il Penseroso*. Here again the earliest recording (Victor 95016—1904), with flute obbligato by no less a person than M. Gaubert of the Paris Opéra, and piano accompaniment by Landon Ronald, shows more vocal agility than her later recording; yet the latter disc (Victor 88068 or 6214), with flute and orchestra accompaniment, is a valued souvenir of the noted soprano.

In her middle years, Melba gradually abandoned coloratura and, in opera, con-

centrated on such lyrical roles as Mimi in *La Bohème*; it was always a favorite role of hers. Her singing of the music was considered ideal and her recording of the *Addio* (88072 or 6210, dating from 1907) has some lovely moments. In the duet with Caruso, *O soave fanciulla* (Victor 95200—also 1907), the beauty of her voice is unexcelled. Outstanding among her lyric arias are the two from *Otello* (Victor 6211), recorded in 1910. Her remarkable tonal purity, perfect legato and exquisite phrasing contribute tellingly to the success of these performances. The trying passage at the end of the *Ave Maria*, which defeats so many singers, is negotiated with complete security by the fifty-one year old Melba. Her consistency and technical assurance seem never to have failed her. Another example of her chaste style, marred only by an interpolated high note at the end, is *Voi che sapete* from Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* (Victor 88067 or 6219, made in 1910). The rarer 1907 version (88067—same number but with Grand Prize label) does not end with the questionable high note.

Melba had a rare gift as a singer of simple songs. She sang them, almost always, in melting tones with a touching simplicity of style and expression that was genuinely artistic. Listen to *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon* (88150 or 6218); *Comin' thro' the rye* (88449 or 6218); *John Anderson, my jo* on 88455 (*jo* is the ancient Gaelic word for soul); *Songs my mother taught me* (88485); and *Magdalen at Michel's Gate* (88452). Aside from physically beautiful singing, these recordings show a depth of feeling that makes them more endearing than anything else Melba has left us.

In this short article I have aimed to present the discs of Melba that I value most highly and regard as her best. There is more to be said about her recordings. In the December 1931 issue of *The Gramophone* an English writer endeavored to survey her artistry, but his views were far too laudatory to be valuable to a discriminating collector. Of more value is the discography, not quite complete, which he presented in the January 1932 issue of the same periodical.



RECORD NOTES AND

REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Since the American companies have not put out any recordings this month, we have decided to include here some reviews of English releases which have come to our attention. The past 18 months in England have seen the issuance of a series of recordings of works by leading British composers, most of them living today. The publication of these records has been subsidized by a "British Council," the same group that has sent out a good deal of British music, as propaganda, to foreign countries. Believing that our readers will be interested in many of these new recordings, we have made every effort to

procure them, and to review them as they arrive. It is to be hoped that the domestic companies will see fit to release these recordings here in the future. A word about importing records today: we are told that only H.M.V. and English Columbia can be obtained; no English Decca are being imported for the duration.

Orchestra

BUTTERWORTH: *A Shropshire Lad—Rhapsody*; played by the Halle Orchestra, direction of Sir Adrian Boult. H.M.V. disc C3287, price \$2.10 on import.

▲ In a small way, I can claim a share in the realization of this recording. A few years back when Sir Adrian Boult was in this country I had a long talk with him about sundry musical subjects, works that should be recorded and works all too seldom heard in the concert hall. "Why," I exclaimed, "has no one ever made a recording in the past dozen years since electrical recording began of Butterworth's *Shropshire Lad*?" (There was once an acoustic recording.) Sir Adrian's face lit up. "Do you know that work?" he asked. Of course, I knew it; I've known it for

over 25 years, and have regarded it highly all that time. Nearly a decade ago, I took a recording of the work off the air, when Sir Thomas Beecham played the Rhapsody with the N. Y. Philharmonic. Countless friends and musicians have heard that recording and praised the music time and time again. I told all this to Sir Adrian. "I've tried to record that work a dozen times," he told me, "but I've never been able to get a record company to see my viewpoint." I am certain that others urged Sir Adrian besides myself to make a recording of it; there were two other American musicians who backed me up when I suggested it. Sir Adrian said then he would try to realize our wishes when he went back to England; that was just before the war. It took a little time, but finally in June, 1942, the recording was released. It took over a year after this for my copy of the work to reach me.

George Sainton Kaye Butterworth was a singularly gifted composer. Born in London in 1885, he was cut off in the prime of life in the battle of Pozieres, August 5, 1916. During his college years at Oxford, he became interested in folk-song and in the influences of nationality on art generally. His friendship with Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp undoubtedly spurred this interest on. Butterworth helped Vaughan Williams in the preparation of the score of the *London Symphony*, and wrote notes for its initial performance; the work is dedicated "To the memory of George Butterworth."

Butterworth wrote a cycle of six songs to poems from Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*.^{*} Later, he took the theme of his first song and wrote his orchestral rhapsody. Few that I know who have heard that haunting, modal theme have forgotten it. There is a nostalgic quality to it that indelibly imprints it upon the memory. Time and time again, I have found myself humming or whistling that tune. It is a melody that lends itself ideally to a meandering type of work like the rhapsody the composer made of it. The intrinsic worth of this music does not concern the listener—he is either completely enchanted with it or completely indifferent to it.

* These songs have been recorded by English Decca (Discs M506-07).

I think my friend W. R. Anderson touches the heart of the matter when he says: "A beautiful recording of poignant music; very simple, direct, singing with an inward yet open-hearted appreciation of nature. But one has to brace the mind to receive such music now: it is almost too much to hear in a mad world this epilogue to the *Shropshire Lad* songs, in which Housman sang of mortality, of man's sense of exile from the home of the spirit. The orchestral piece muses on the theme which Butterworth had written for the first song of his cycle-setting:

"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands above the woodland ride,
Wearing white for Eastertide.

"Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a
score

It only leaves me fifty more.

"And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hang with snow."

I quote the poem in its entirety because the nostalgia of its lines is matched by Butterworth's music—the pastoral picture of the proverbial but ever perfect spring. Both poem and music sprung from impulses prior to a great world disturbance, a period of less nervous tension than the times that followed the conflict of 1914-18. What artists since those ominous days have found the note of tranquillity which was apparent not only in art before 1914, but also in the performing artist? To return to the music, let Anderson continue:

"...With its thirty-year ago provenance and certain obvious touches of the French impressionists, it [Butterworth's rhapsody] enshrines a spirit that we have come to hold in affection through the more extensive life-work of Delius. That opening call is the more poignant as one hears in it an ending also—the pathos of a life cut short after so few expressions of joy in its hope." Anderson refers to the fact that this music was written in 1913. It is of interest to know that Nikisch

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gave the work its first performance.

Concerning the performance here I feel justified in quoting Anderson again, because I agree with him. "Boult has conducted it often: no more sympathetic interpreter could be wished." Boult's honest musicianship, in my estimation, does more for the composer than Beecham's beguiling efforts.

The quality of the recording is excellent; there is just enough resonance to create an atmosphere of realism. Let us hope that Victor will re-press this recording at an early date; or perhaps prevail upon Toscanini to record it. I could imagine no one who would realize its worth better than the noted Italian maestro.

—P. H. R.

MOERAN: *Symphony in G minor* (11 sides); played by the Hallé Orchestra, direction of Leslie Heward, and **RAWTORNE:** *Four Bagatelles* (1 side); played by Denis Matthews (piano). H.M.V. discs C3319/24, price \$2.10 per disc on import.

▲ This symphony was introduced not long ago in a broadcast to American listeners by the young American conductor, Bernard Herrmann. At the time, the work impressed me greatly, and subsequent hearings of it from the recording have confirmed my first impression that this is definitely a well thought-out and developed score. Some of my readers may have read my friend W. R. Anderson's review in *The Gramophone* for January, 1943. He said that the work appealed to him "by reason both of its strength, even roughness, and its notably lyrical sense."

Ernest John Moeran is an English composer of Irish descent, born near London on December 31, 1894. For the most part he was self-taught in composition, but he spent two years at the Royal College of Music in London. No discerning listener could possibly mistake the English-Irish influences of this work. Spiritually the score is in line with the music of Delius, Vaughan Williams and Arnold Bax, but it is in no way derivative. Some of the brooding quality of Sibelius is noted also, and Anderson contended it had some Russian traits, but these are less apparent to me. First and foremost, I feel the Delius

spirit, but Moeran is formally far more astute. Moeran's themes have a distinctly Keltic-folkish quality, and his use of the flattened seventh is characteristic of the folk-modal type of writing which is largely associated with much modern English music.

The work is divided into the conventional four movements. The first, marked *allegro*, opens with pastoral pipings, reminiscent of Delius. The music is atmospheric, full and rich in scoring, but inclined toward rumination; it has poetic plangency, and considerable variation in mood. Anderson speaks of a looseness in this movement: "I do not think the matter hangs together too well, despite the working together of various elements of the thematic material; the manipulation doesn't quite convince, somehow." There is some justification for this criticism, but I am inclined to think that despite its looseness of form this movement will grow on one. The mood is neo-romantic, and who would gainsay an Irishman's little digressions from the main theme of his story? Of the second movement, Anderson has said: "it seems to grow and live much more naturally and richly. It has been called a 'wintry elegy'. But a good wintry elegy is one of the finest poetic evocations to hope for . . . Moeran is surely a poet." Moeran might well have called this *lento* a Keltic Elegy had he been so minded, and published it as a tone poem apart from his symphony. Each of these two movements takes three sides in the recording.

The scherzo, which follows, takes one and a half sides, and the finale takes three and a half sides. A long work, some might think, but I can assure the reader that one does not feel that way when listening to it. The scherzo is a delightful movement, rhythmically alert and imaginative. The finale opens with a slow introduction and moves into an *allegro molto* which shows the composer's gifts for imaginative interplay and definitely proves him to be another English rhapsodist. Moeran's form in part, I should say, grows out of itself, but not in the often disconcerting manner of so many modernists (let's not pick on Sibelius for introducing this style); Moeran is by no means as complex as some mod-

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ernists, for he has considerable imagination and moreover he has "heart," which is but another way of saying he is a true poet.

The performance of this symphony is splendidly realized. Some of us will appreciate the excellence of the performance the more, knowing that its conductor, Leslie Heward, is no longer with us. He died in the spring, at the age of forty-six, after a long illness. In England he has long been held in high esteem; he was regarded as one of that country's foremost conductors. Speaking of the many recordings he has made, Walter Legge in an obituary wrote: "In all of them there is the sense of easy and tender beauty that made Heward, musically speaking, the most satisfying conductor this country has had since Beecham."

The recording is excellently accomplished; it offers no problems in the obtaining of perfect reproduction. And the surfaces of the records definitely suggest that England has taken less shellac away from the record companies than we have in this country; they are, to put it briefly, perfect. I recommend this recording to all readers who are interested in new music and the work of living men.

Maybe Victor will release this symphony in this country. I hope so.

The *Four Bagatelles*, on the twelfth side of the set, are by Alan Rawsthorne, a Lancashireman born in 1905. They are striking compositions, showing strength and purpose and a fine understanding of rhythm. Of Rawsthorne, Frank A. Howes says in the latest volume of *Grove*: that he is "one of the most thoughtful and purposeful of the youngest group of composers to attain recognition... his music bears little trace of... cosmopolitanism or... nationalism... it is therefore more solidly grounded... its only symptom of aggressive modernism is that he dispenses with all key signature..." Further on, Howes states that Rawsthorne shows an unfailing power of thinking musical thoughts in terms of the instruments for which he writes. This explains more than anything why these *Bagatelles* were instantly arresting after the playing of a long symphony; their pianistic qualities are irrefutable and one listens with ap-

January, 1944

UNAVAILABLE SETS

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Beethoven: Violin Sonata Sets—Kreisler.
Vol. 4.
Beethoven: Archduke Trio—Victor M-92.
Beethoven: Quintet in E Flat, Op. 16, V.
M-16.
Beethoven: Violin Concerto—Kreisler, set
M-13.
Beethoven: Kreutzer Sonata — Thibaud/
Cortot.
Beethoven: Eroica Symphony — Mengel-
berg.
Beethoven: Kreutzer Sonata — Kreisler/
Rupp.
Bloch: Quintet for Piano & Strings, V.
DM-191.
Brahms: Double Concerto — Thibaud/
Casals, M-99.
Brahms: Piano Quartet, Op. 60, Col. set
M-198.
Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1—Bachaus,
M-209.
Chopin: Concerto No. 2 — Rubinstein,
M-110.
Fauré: Quartet, Op. 121, DM-372.
Franck: Sonata—Thibaud/Cortot. M-81.
Kreisler: Quartet in A minor, M-335.
Mozart: Quintet for Woodwinds, K. 452.
M-137.
Mozart: Piano Quartet in G minor, K 478.
M-251.
Mozart: Jupiter Symphony—Boult & B.
B.C., M-203.
Sibelius: Symphony No. 5 — Kajanus.
M-333.
Shumann: Trio in D minor, set M-52.
Schuman: Carnaval—Rachmaninoff. M-70.
Strauss: Don Quichotte—Beecham. M-144.
Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto — Elman.
M-79.
Wagner: Goetterdaemmerung, set M-60.
Hugo Wolf Society Sets, Vol. 3 & 4.

HARD-TO-GET SETS

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AM-117.
Brahms: Quartet, Op. 25. M-234.
Beethoven: "Ghost" Trio. M-370.
Beethoven: Cello Sonata, Op. 5, No. 2.
M-281.
Schumann: Quartet, Op. 41, No. 3. M-224.
Many other sets in both lists not given.

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preciation to the instrument because one instinctively feels that no other would do justice to the music. Denis Matthews plays the four pieces very well, and the recording is good.

—P. H. R.

Chamber Music

MOERAN: *Trio in G major*; played by Jean Pougner (violin), Frederick Riddle (viola), and Anthony Pincello. English Columbia discs DX-10/14/16, price about \$2.10 per disc.

▲ This work was issued in England in July 1941. In an age of dissonance and aggressive technical development this music comes as a surprise. It neither harkens backward nor does it look forward; it has a universal flavor of folk tunes which are fresh and free, spirited rather than archaic. The mood of the whole work is pastoral. Again, as in the symphony, one feels strongly Moeran's kinship to Vaughan Williams and to Delius. But here he seems more successful on the whole than in the symphony; for this is more of a piece, so to speak. Cobbett's dictionary said of Moeran in 1930 that it was to be hoped that he would continue his work in chamber music forms; "such great promise must not be allowed to go without further fulfillment." Cobbett praises an early quartet and a piano trio. I agree with Cobbett; Moeran seems singularly gifted in the chamber music field. A trio that really *sounds* is difficult to write; it is an ungrateful form at best. There are, of course, some fine examples of trios by modern writers. This one deserves to be included among them, as has already been observed by one English reviewer.

The music is instantly arresting; the thematic material of the opening is graceful, moving forward with nicely calculated feeling, each tune flowing easily and naturally into the next. This material gives way to a tripping type of melody, completely bucolic in character. With the development the mood changes; the direction reads *minaccioso* (menacing), and the writing takes on a harsh character. Alec Robertson wrote in *The Gramophone* that as the big climax of the movement is reached, one can imagine a conflict of the



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elements. He, along with others, tends to read a pastoral program into the whole work. Thus he finds that the slow movement suggests that "the world is wintry and life a struggle." After the conflict in the first movement, the recapitulation or return to the opening material is wholly elusive. The composer has shown considerable imagination in achieving contrast.

The *adagio* is short (one record side). Here the mood is contemplative — suggesting grave and sorrowful brooding. The poignant melodies move at first from instrument to instrument before they blend into a richly impressive sonority. There is a suggestion of futility in the closing

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phrases and the music seems to end with a sigh. The scherzo (one record side) immediately disperses the gravity; it is gay and carefree. With its staccati and plucked notes it fleetingly recalls Debussy's handling of similar material, but the mood here is Gaelic, not Gallic.

The opening of the finale has a folk lilt; again the melodies move up and down with amazing fluidity — fluidity is in fact the principal charm of the whole work. The mood here is one of happy contemplation (*andante grazioso*). The merry freedom of this music, its meandering joyfulness, leads toward the end into a short, twirling and animated country dance.

The work is dedicated to the Pasquier Trio — those three highly talented brothers. Yet, as Alec Robertson says, it is hard to imagine it better played than it is by the present group. The smoothness of the ensemble and the balance have been excellently preserved by the recorders, and (stage whisper) the surfaces are such that I forgot there was that added element in recording which manifests itself so obtrusively upon occasion. —P. H. R.

BACH, BRONTE, ETC.

(Continued from page 113)

after hearing his records again and again, and comparing them with records made by Toscanini, Walter Weingartner, von Schillings, Koussevitzky, Beecham, Blech, and several other conductors.

Whenever I hear the Stokowski-Philadelphia recordings of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*, I am ravished by the beautiful effects of tone, as the music floats along; but at the end I realize that I have missed that comprehensive impressionistic, or rather, atmospheric, effect which the same music has given me elsewhere (compare it with Beecham's less personalized performance), and I feel what I have been listening to — this display of vivid reflections, like jewels upon the water — is not at all what Debussy intended. And, with a few exceptions, so it with all the Stokowski recordings.

Book Review

(Continued from page 124)

Edison Company, for "it was an advantage to figure in a catalogue almost free of violinistic rivals; and the advantage was demonstrated in the twice yearly royalty checks that regularly increased in size." Now his records bear the Victor label, and at least one major work he has recorded has not yet been released.

The narrative ends about 1927, a few years after he was mustered out of the army as a lieutenant, having risen in the ranks from a volunteer buck private. Naturally, one looks forward to Volume 2.

Mr. Spalding reveals that he is far more than a concert artist. He is a warm, responsive human being whose major interest in life precludes the accumulation of money for its own sake. Rather, he prefers to rise and follow where music leads him, frequently to villages where he often finds an experience in human values "sought in vain in a metropolis." There in a sentence you have the measure of this extraordinary American.

Walter F. Grueninger.

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 128)

the shipment of other material which he has promised to send.

* * *

Misprints creep in where we least expect them. More often than not they are the result of a last-minute mistake in a line: in re-setting the line after we have departed, the linotyper not infrequently makes another mistake which he does not always catch. Mr. Fassett writes: "Look what your printer did to the last word of my Clement article (last month)!!! Never again will I get 'nostalgic' at the end of an article for you." Fassett wrote: "The records are characteristic of Clement — haunting and unforgettable" and "unforgettable" emerged as "forgettable." Our face refuses to get red anymore; we commiserate with Mr. Fassett, but this — we realize — does very little good.

* * *

A happy New Year to all!

The American Music Lover

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